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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5504  
INFO RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 1327  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0200  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 3068  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0249  
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1269  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0122  
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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0889  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 5575  
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY 0059  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 001570

NOFORN  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ELA, ISN/NESS, ISN/RA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/12/2019

TAGS: [ENRG](#) [KNNP](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDAN CREATES TASK FORCE TO FIND COMMON GROUND  
FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON 123 NUCLEAR COOPERATION AGREEMENT

REF: A. AMMAN 1489  
[1](#)B. AMMAN 1394  
[1](#)C. AMMAN 1356  
[1](#)D. AMMAN 1319  
[1](#)E. AMMAN 825  
[1](#)F. 07 AMMAN 3656  
[1](#)G. 07 AMMAN 939

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for  
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: The Government of Jordan (GOJ) has created a high-level, interagency Task Force to consider USG-proposed changes on the bilateral 123 Nuclear Energy Cooperation Agreement (NCA). This development appears to be the result of the Ambassador going over Toukan's head and speaking with the Royal Court, which instructed the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC) to find common ground and advance negotiations. JAEC has maintained, however, that any new standards be global rather than regional and in line with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), noting concerns about the lack of a secure international fuel supply. The GOJ continues to reiterate its desire for a high-level USG team to come to Jordan as soon as possible to conclude negotiations. Regarding development of its nuclear program, JAEC expects to award the contract for the site survey shortly and has indicated that a U.S. company is a top contender. Jordan has begun engaging its neighbors on its nuclear energy program, including Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Lebanon, as well as the Arab League. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) JAEC Chairman Khaled Toukan requested a meeting with Econoff on July 7 to deliver the message that Jordan, at the very top levels, is very keen to reach a 123 Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA) with the U.S. After many months of a stalemate over USG-proposed changes to the February 2008

text, Toukan said that the Royal Court and Prime Minister had instructed JAEC to move ahead with negotiations and try to find common ground (reftels). Accordingly, a high-level, interagency Task Force -- including representatives from the Royal Court, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and JAEC -- had been created and would meet over the next two weeks to come up with new ideas and language to put on the table. Toukan said that the goal is to give more assurances to the U.S. and alleviate proliferation concerns, but still allow Jordan to maintain its rights. (COMMENT: Toukan asserts that these rights include Jordan's ability to pursue in the future uranium enrichment. END COMMENT.)

13. (C) Toukan reiterated that he hoped Washington would be able to send to Jordan soon a high-level team of "decision makers" to conclude negotiations. (NOTE: JAEC Commissioner Kamal Araj, who was also in the meeting, did not repeat his offer to have a Jordanian team go to the U.S. (ref A). END NOTE.) They again proposed that any USG team include officials who negotiated the February 2008 text and/or have been involved in the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP). Toukan also expressed the hope that the USG would stop using the U.S.-UAE Agreement as a model. Both Toukan and Araj continuously stressed that any new standards be global rather than regional and consistent with principles of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA), and GNEP. Toukan welcomed the recent announcement by President Obama and Russian President Medvedev on reaching an agreement to reduce arsenals and said that Jordan would happily join a new global NPT regime aimed

AMMAN 00001570 002 OF 003

at achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, again underscoring the need for it to be a universal nuclear free zone, not just for the region.

14. (C) Toukan suggested that one of his main concerns was that an international fuel supply was still not secure, noting that nothing concrete had come out of GNEP yet. Araj asked for clearer indication of the USG's current position towards GNEP since it was his understanding based on some recent press articles that the U.S. Congress had cut some of the GNEP funding. Araj also confirmed that Jordan supported the U.S. position to discuss the international fuel bank concept at the June IAEA Board of Governors meeting, but said there was G-7 opposition to the initiatives (ref D).

15. (C) Regarding the current state of play in the Jordanian nuclear program, Toukan indicated that a U.S. and a Belgian company were "neck and neck" in winning a contract for doing a site survey. He said that the JAEC might end up dividing the contract and giving one company the site survey in the southern region and the other a site in the central region. In response to a question on how many reactors he currently envisions, Toukan replied that realistically given some of the financing challenges, his current thinking was to have four reactors (possibly two in Aqaba in the south and two in the central region) built over the next 30-35 years. While the central region has fewer seismic concerns than the south, Toukan conceded that water scarcity will be an issue for reactors located in central Jordan.

16. (C) Toukan also confirmed that he planned to discuss Jordan's nuclear program with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and the Arab League in the coming weeks. He said the GOJ had good meetings with the Israelis on June 11, noting the creation of the three technical working groups on water, regulatory infrastructure, and seismic issues. He indicated that Jordan planned to keep the Israelis informed as plans develop and would let them visit the site once determined (ref B). Currently in NCA negotiations with Argentina, the Czech Republic, and Spain, JAEC aims to conclude nine NCAs by the end of 2009, and Toukan hoped that the U.S. and Japan would be added to the list. (NOTE: Jordan currently has six NCAs with France, China, Russia, South Korea, Canada, and the UK. END NOTE.) He provided a hard copy of the recently

signed Jordan-UK Agreement, which will be forwarded to Washington septel.

¶7. (S/NF) Comment: Going over Toukan's head to the Chief of the Royal Court and Prime Minister on the need for Jordan to seriously consider proposed changes to the NCA clearly helped put Toukan back in his place -- at least temporarily in tone and approach (refs A, C). Absent consistent pressure from more senior levels of the government, it is unlikely Toukan's position on substance will change or that his new, more moderate tone will remain. For now, though, a more-conciliatory Toukan appeared to have new marching orders to advance negotiations by seriously considering (rather than flat-out dismissing) proposed changes. He still seems, however, stuck on the need to protect "Jordan's rights under the NPT." It is unclear whether the participation of other Jordanian agencies which better comprehend the political realities will help keep his views in check. This will likely depend on the seniority and assertiveness of the other agencies' representatives. We look forward to receiving Washington's response on the possibility of sending a high-level, interagency USG delegation to Jordan with the goal of concluding 123 negotiations.

AMMAN 00001570 003 OF 003

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